

# A Very Long Night

*Setting: Pine Hollow, Oregon; present day*

## Cast of Characters

SKYE: 11-year old girl; curious and adventurous

MAMA: Skye's mother; late 30's; caring and sweet

GRAM: Skye's grandmother; physically frail, but youthful in spirit

ARWEN: 13-year old girl; precocious and serious

CALLEN: 13-year old boy; rough and tumble with a good sense of humor

## SCENE 1 - The House

*(SKYE and GRAM are in the living room of their home, which also serves as the dining room. GRAM is knitting in her favorite recliner. SKYE is lying on the living room rug, playing with a collection of action figures. The house is densely decorated with trinkets and souvenirs from family vacations, and family photos fill the walls. In one corner sits a record player, and in another corner a battered toy chest. The furniture is out of fashion, having been owned by GRAM for some time and never updated. MAMA is preparing dinner. She enters from the kitchen from time to time, carrying plates and other table settings.)*

SKYE: *(in a gruff voice meant to be that of one of her action figures)* Now who could that be at the door? Don't worry, honey . . . I'll get it. *(switches to a rather high-pitched tone)* Hi there, mister! We hate to bother you but we're looking for directions to the big mountain and . . . we can't seem to find it. *(In the gruff voice)* Can't find it? Well look right over there, dummy. You can't miss it. *(switching voices again)* Over where? Could you show us again? *(gruffly)* It's right there! *(other voice)* You're coming with us! *(SKYE has the two figures at the door grab the gruff man in a scuffle and drag him away.)*

*GRAM chuckles before lapsing into a coughing fit.*

SKYE *(using a third voice)* Honey? Who is it? HONEY? *(SKYE makes some indistinct fighting sounds. MAMA enters from the kitchen).*

MAMA: *(interrupting)* Skye, it's time to clean up. Dinner is just about ready.

SKYE: Can't dinner wait? I'm not even hungry!

MAMA: Well, that's too bad . . . because the food is ready. Put your toys away and come to the table. *(to GRAM)* Ma, you too; come sit at the table with us. *(MAMA exits into the kitchen again.)*

SKYE: Aww, I'm not ready to stop playing yet. It was just getting good!

GRAM: It was getting good, wasn't it? *(laughing)* Come on, silly, you can tell me how it ends at the table.

*(SKYE leaves all but one of the action figures on the floor and grudgingly goes to the table, still*

*holding one of the figures. GRAM sets down her knitting needles, heaves herself from her chair, and crosses to the table as well. MAMA enters with two plates of food. She sets them in front of SKYE and GRAM, then turns to go back to the kitchen for the last plate. SKYE and GRAM look at the food and share a grimace. GRAM notices SKYE still has one of her toys.)*

GRAM: Ah, I see Gwen be joining us for dinner this evening.

SKYE: *(pretending seriousness)* Well I can't just leave her all alone . . . not with everything she's been through! Did you see what just happened?

GRAM: *(laughing)* Oh, I know. Gwen's had a rough night, hasn't she? I think she definitely ought to stay for dinner.

*(SKYE puts Gwen on the table next to her plate. MAMA enters and sits, then notices the toy on the table and sighs, clearly annoyed.)*

MAMA: Skye, the toys can wait until after we eat.

SKYE: But Ma!

*(MAMA takes Gwen and moves her to the couch. SKYE and GRAM share a disappointed look.)*

MAMA: Well don't just look at it, go ahead and eat.

SKYE: *(sighing heavily.)* Is this broccoli? I hate broccoli.

MAMA: It won't hurt you to eat something green now and then, Sweetie.

*(GRAM takes an exaggeratedly difficult bite of the broccoli.)*

GRAM: *(sarcastically)* Mmmm, it's really good Skye.

SKYE: Gram! You hate broccoli, don't lie!

GRAM: Oh no, I love it. *(GRAM forces herself to eat another piece, still chewing the previous bite.)*

SKYE: *(SKYE pushes her plate away.)* Well, I'm not eating it.

MAMA: Skye, you need to eat *something* besides the chicken.

*(GRAM inconspicuously spits out the broccoli she has been chewing into a napkin, sets it aside, and takes a drink of water to wash down the taste.)*

SKYE: *(defiant)* Okay, but why do I have to eat THIS? *(SKYE pushes her plate away.)* Isn't there anything that tastes...?

*(MAMA gives SKYE a stern look that shuts her up. GRAM laughs, again setting off a coughing fit.)*

MAMA: Tastes like what, Skye?

*(SKYE is silent.)*

This isn't a restaurant. You can eat what I cook, or you can go hungry.

*(SKYE throws up her arms in frustration and then crosses them over her chest in protest, turning her head away from the table.)*

SKYE: I choose to go hungry.

*(SKYE pushes her chair back and hops down. She crosses to the couch and reaches for Gwen. MAMA gives GRAM a frustrated look.)*

MAMA: Hold on, Skye. Don't you have some more reading to do—for your social studies class? I know you have a test coming up.

*(SKYE groans and buries her face in the couch.)*

SKYE: Why does it matter, mama? I want to go outside!

MAMA: Well, you should have thought about that before you spent all day playing with your toys.

GRAM: *(chuckles)* We had fun though--didn't we, Skye?

SKYE: Gram would let me play...

MAMA: Well, I'm your mother, and I'm telling you that you need to clear your plate and go study. If you finish your homework before bedtime, you can play.

*(Sulking, SKYE stands and takes her plate to the kitchen. MAMA gives GRAM a disapproving look. SKYE reenters.)*

SKYE: If you can tell me what to do just because you're my mother, then why can't Gram boss you around?

MAMA: *(not having it)* You know what, Skye? When you show you can take care of yourself—and your grades, then I'll stop bossing you around. Right now, though, you're going to finish reading that social studies chapter.

SKYE: *(SKYE goes to the bookshelf and pulls out a large textbook.)* FINE.

*(Long pause.)*

GRAM: I think she makes a very good point. Maybe I should be bossing you around.

MAMA: *(stifling a laugh.)* You be quiet. I think it's about time you took a rest, Ma.

GRAM: *(crossing to her chair)* Oh hush and let me finish my knitting. Besides, someone has to keep an eye on Skye while you clean up the kitchen. *(GRAM winks at SKYE.)*

MAMA: *(shaking her head)* You'd better be grateful that I love you, with the way you talk to me.

*(MAMA exits to the kitchen with the remaining dishes. SKYE enters with a textbook, lies down on the carpet near her action figures, and looks longingly at them. MAMA enters, takes the toys, and puts them away. SKYE feigns a look of shock and hurt. She looks to GRAM, hoping for backup. MAMA exits again to the kitchen. SKYE sighs and opens her book. GRAM stands—with difficulty—and puts on a soothing record.)*

SKYE: Isn't that enough studying yet? Can I please go outside?

MAMA: *(poking her head in from the kitchen)* It's been two minutes, Skye.

*(SKYE groans and reads a few more pages. GRAM reaches for her purse and produces a candy bar, which she slips into the pocket of her housedress. She sets her knitting aside, rises, and begins swaying to the music. She dances, humming aloud to the music, as SKYE watches. She then reveals the candy bar to SKYE and motions her over. SKYE hops up and goes to GRAM, taking the candy bar. GRAM puts her finger over her mouth, signaling SKYE to keep it secret. SKYE smiles and goes back to her book, eating as she reads, careful not to expose the candy bar to MAMA. GRAM has a coughing fit and sits back down in her chair.)*

MAMA: *(entering to check on GRAM)* Ma, do you need some tea? You don't sound too good.

GRAM: Oh, I'm alright.

*(Beat.)*

But I *will* take some tea if you're offering. Earl Grey?

*(MAMA nods and exits to the kitchen. GRAM returns to her knitting. After a pause, SKYE slams shut her book and sighs in relief.)*

GRAM: Well, aren't you happy to have gotten that over with?

SKYE: Can I go now, please Gram?

GRAM: It looks to me like you studied plenty. Why don't you go have fun?

SKYE: Really? I can go?

GRAM: I think you better get going unless you want your mama to come up with something else for you to do.

SKYE: Thanks, Gram! *(SKYE hops up, kisses GRAM's cheek, and heads for the door.)*

GRAM: Skye, aren't you forgetting someone?

*(GRAM points to Gwen, still sitting on the couch. SKYE runs over and collects her.)*

SKYE: Thanks again, Gram!

*(SKYE exits.)*

MAMA: *(entering with tea for GRAM)* Skye, you also need to study for that—where is Skye?

GRAM: I told her she could go out and play.

MAMA: *(visibly frustrated)* Why would you do that? You know she isn't doing well in social studies or science, and—

GRAM: *(interrupting)* She's a kid, let her go explore. She'll learn more out there than sulking in this house all afternoon. *(She starts coughing. In the pause, MAMA goes to look out the window, hopeful she'll spot SKYE.)*

MAMA: *(sighing)* Well, I'm sure she's long gone by now.

GRAM: *(sips tea)* Yes, if she's anything like you were . . .

MAMA: *(defensive)* Like I was? Well, at least . . .

GRAM: Oh, you were something.

MAMA: Alright, alright, I get it. That is beside the point, though. She's my daughter and I want better for her, okay? She doesn't need to be like I was.

GRAM: *(thoughtfully)* She would do good to be like you were.

*(Beat. MAMA smiles and goes to put her arm around GRAM.)*

How about a nap?

*(MAMA goes to help GRAM up. GRAM declines the help and stands on her own.)*

GRAM: I got it, I got it. Thank you, baby.

*(GRAM kisses MAMA on the forehead, then exits. MAMA collapses in GRAM's recliner, exhausted. She enjoys the peaceful moment. Lights fade.)*

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